DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 369 HE 004 538

AUTHOR Johnson, Willard R.
TITLE Minority Access to Higher Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
INSTITUTION Academy for Educational Development, Inc., Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 27p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Admission (School); *Admission Criteria; Disadvantaged Youth; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Finance; *Educational Programs; *Higher Education; *Minority Groups; Student Problems
IDENTIFIERS *Massachusetts

ABSTRACT

Minority access to higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts falls short of its obligation by nearly 8,000 students. One barrier to minority student access is the location of the state colleges and community colleges, most of which are removed from urban centers where minority populations are concentrated. However extra effort, outreach programs, better communications, and more stringent efforts to work with high schools to improve motivation and preparation could be more important than location in giving access to minority students. The barriers that need to be eliminated to achieve access for minority students include: (1) inadequate preparation at the primary and secondary level; (2) need for special programs and supportive services to compensate for such deficiencies; (3) lack of adequate financial means to attend college; and (4) a discouraging atmosphere for minority students at institutions of higher education. Recommendations include: (1) establishment of a Commission on Minority Access to Higher Education; (2) development of community and state colleges into access/entry points for minority students; (3) minority students should receive 40-50% of scholarship resources; and (4) support for special programs to assist minority students in preparation for college. (Author/PG)

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MINORITY ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

By Willard R. Johnson
Associate Professor of Political Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Report Prepared For

Academy for Educational Development
1424 - 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

April 1973

HE 004 538

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MINORITY ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

By Willard R. Johnson*

Ours is not "common" wealth, neither in distinction nor in distribution, in so far as higher education is concerned. No state in this Union is better endowed with educational resources. Surely one might rightly hope that, were one destined to be born disadvantaged, it be in Massachusetts, a state so able to provide that element which alone exposes with equal effectiveness those human distinctions based on capacity and on caprice. Yet, this prime resource of the state is not the asset it could and should be for minority group**populations. We fall short of achieving equal educational opportunity at the higher levels.

I. The Size of the Gap

The precise measure of our shortfall -- the gap between what the state has and ought to have achieved in meeting its obligations to its own citizenry and to the country at large -- is difficult

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*The opinions, conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the policy of the Academy for Educational Development.

**In this study we are defining minority groups to include Blacks, American Indians, Spanish surnamed persons, and Orientals, in accordance with the definitions used by the Civil Rights Commission in its higher education survey.

to determine.* Data are inadequate, procedures for measuring current and potential effort may vary, and the principles by which one may determine the extent of the public obligation may also differ. Yet by one reasonable reckoning, the public institutions may be said to fall short of their current obligations to grant access to higher education for minority students by nearly 8,000 students.

This estimate is based on the fact that in 1972 minority students comprised approximately 6.1% of the total enrollment of students in institutions of higher education, public and private, in the Commonwealth, as shown in Table 1. Minorities comprised 12.3% of the national population in 1970. This percentage of the total enrollment of 255,114 students in institutions reporting minority enrollment** in Massachusetts would give 31,379 minority students. However, in Massachusetts in 1972 there were only about 15,533 minority students. This number is 15,846 students less than 12.3% of the total enrollment in the state.

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*This study is based on enrollment figures for those institutions which report enrollment for the total student body, and for American Indian, Black, Oriental and Spanish surname students. We have figures for all but about thirty of the smaller institutions.

**These figures do not include those for thirty institutions (all quite small) for which we do not have adequate information. Although the total figures understate the situation, we believe the percentage figures are reliable.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Minority Students

In Institutions of Higher Education in Massachusetts, 1972

Institution Type	Total Enrollment	Total Minorities	Minorities as a percentage of Total	Percentage of all Minorities
Private Institutions:				
2-year junior colleges*	8,227	711	8.6%	4.6%
4-year colleges - more than 2000 students enrolled	27,713	1,458	5.3%	9.3%
4-year colleges - less than 2000 students enrolled	31,382	3,027	9.4%	19.5%
Universities	103,305	6,013	5.8%	38.7%
Subtotal	170,627	11,209	6.6%	72.1%
Public Institutions:				
2-year community colleges	26,200	969	3.7%	6.2%
4-year state colleges	28,904	1,071	3.7%	6.9%
University of Massachusetts	29,383	2,284	7.7%	14.7%
Subtotal	84,487	4,324	5.1%	27.8%
TOTAL	255,114	15,533	6.1%	100.0%

*includes one municipal college

Sources: Data for public state colleges are from "Status Report January 25, 1973 Programs for Disadvantaged Students in the Massachusetts State College System." Data for Massachusetts Institute of Technology were made available by the institution. All the other data are from unpublished figures on file with the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Washington, D C. Data were not available for about 30 colleges. Minorities include Blacks, American Indians, Orientals, and Spanish surnamed persons.

Many people may differ about the proportion of this shortfall the state supported institutions should be obliged to make up, but we argue that it should be at least half, or to be exact, 7,923 students.

Why should the state institutions bear half this burden? Currently almost 60% of the total higher education enrollment is in private institutions. Also minorities constitute only about 4% of the total population of the state*, but over 5% of the enrollment in state supported institutions.

One reason that we believe that state institutions should make up half the shortfall is that an undetermined number of students, which we believe to be a significant number, at the University of Massachusetts and other state institutions are from out-of-state. Also, we would not be surprised if the percentage of minority students among out-of-state students is greater than among in-state students. It is clear that Massachusetts draws on a national population, even for some of the state supported institutions. It would be inappropriate for such an educational center, which benefits greatly from such resources, to restrict its basis of

*Minorities constituted from 3.6% to 4.7% of Massachusetts population in 1970, depending on whether one includes persons with Spanish surnames (1.1% of the 1970 population), not all of whom are Puerto Rican or another distinctly disadvantaged minority group.

obligation in equal educational opportunity to purely local population ratios.

Another consideration in fixing the extent of the state obligation to make up the shortfall is that the state has not matched the achievement of the private institutions in enrolling minority students. 5.4% of total enrollments in public institutions are minorities, while the private instituions have a minority enrollment of 6.5%.* Because publicly supported education has an obligation to fill gaps and to equalize opportunities, we fix the state's obligation in correcting the inequity at a higher level than the private institutions, although no class of institutions within the state has as yet fulfilled its obligation to offer equal access to its resources for all minority groups in the population.** Thus, despite the fact that state institutions enroll only about 40% of the students, we believe that they should offer places to half the number of new minority students needed to achieve a balanced proportion. This would give the state institutions a total of about 13,000 minority students, or only about 5.1% of the total

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*These figures assume that the 15,846 new minority students displace non-minority students currently enrolled. It is more probable that the total system would grow.

**If we merely asked each category of institutions to expand minority enrollment until it met the national figure of 12.3%, the burden on the state would be only slightly less -- 6369 new minority students.

number of students enrolled in higher education. Minority students in private institutions would then account for about 7.2% of total enrollment.

Among the minority group students, American Indians are about 5.5%, Blacks 68.5%, Orientals 12.4% and Spanish Surname 13.6%. These figures suggest that Orientals may be somewhat over-represented among the minority students, and Spanish surnames and Indians quite under-represented. Blacks accounted for about 64.4% of the minority population listed in the 1970 national census for the state of Massachusetts, while Spanish surnames accounted for over 24%. We caution on the category of Spanish surname, because not all people in this group consider themselves part of a disadvantaged minority. We have no precise figures for the Oriental and Indian populations, but the census category "other", which includes both groups, accounts for only 11.5% of the state's minority population. It would seem that special efforts should be undertaken by the state and private institutions alike to enroll students with Indian and Spanish American backgrounds.

While no state institution comes anywhere near achieving an enrollment of minority students equal to its proportion of the national population, the most glaring disparities exist in the

state colleges and community colleges. Minority students account for only 3.7% of total enrollments in these institutions. Questions might be raised about whether the state and community colleges, which basically serve Massachusetts residents, should be expected to meet targets based on national census data. It should be noted that minority enrollment in these insitutions fails to achieve the proportions of minority population ratios for the state itself. These are revealing facts, considering that these publicly supported institutions should offer more accessible entry points to higher education for minority students, who are the victims of inadequate secondary school preparation and who lack financial resources to attend the larger institutions, private or public (especially prior to the time the Boston campus of the University of Massachusetts has been fully developed).

A review of Table 1 reveals that only 12.1% of the total minority enrollment in the state is in state colleges and community colleges. The data indicate that these institutions are largely irrelevant to the needs of the minority populations of the state. Given the difficulties in achieving immediate access to the more competitive institutions, we would expect a very large part of the burden of opening up opportunitites for educational advancement to

minorities to be borne by the community and state colleges.

It is not clear why these institutions fail so markedly in this task. Most observers believe that the location of the state colleges and community colleges serves as a barrier to minority student access because most of them are removed from urban centers where minority populations are concentrated. Yet even at Boston State College, only 6.5% of the students are from minority groups. Brandeis University does better. The urban state and community colleges, at Boston and Springfield, do have higher percentages of minority students than do the other state colleges, however, giving credence to the idea that location may play a role. Also, according to a 1971 Carnegie Commission report, only 25% of the state's Black population was within commuting distance of a college with non-selective admission requirements and an annual tuition less than $400. Nationwide, however, over 47% of the Black population was within commuting distance of such a college. On the other hand, extra effort, outreach programs, better communications, perhaps more stringent efforts to work with the high schools to improve motivation and preparation could be more important than location in giving access to minority students.

The junior colleges* perform much more satisfactorily, achieving

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*All except one are private.

a level of minority enrollment of 8.6%, a performance that could also no doubt be improved. They do better than the larger private colleges and universities, but poorer than the smaller private colleges and the University of Massachusetts.

The University of Massachusetts has an enrollment of minority students (7.7%) that puts it near the top of the scale. It is curious, however, that its record is not as good as that of the small private colleges, which have 9.4% of their student body made up of minority students, and of institutions like Harvard (9.2% minority), Radcliffe (11.1%), Brandeis (8.0%), Smith (8.7%), and Wellesley (11.2%), where financial and academic requirements would be expected to restrict access for the disadvantaged. The Boston campus already has a higher proportion than Amherst, and we should expect it to become even more important to minorities in the future. However, were the Boston campus to set out to attract as little as a third of the new minority students we believe ought to be allowed into the system, this number, 2641, would go beyond what seems to be current projections for its increase of minority students. If the university expands to 12,500 students, and 65% of the increase continues to made up of low income students, half of whom are minorities, then 2,233 new minority students would be brought in, or over 400 short of even the modest goal we have mentioned above.

II. Means to Fill the Gap

Achieving greater progress toward increasing minority access to higher education in the Commonwealth will probably be determined by the level of institutional commitment and activities taken to eliminate the major barriers to access for most minority students. The traditional barriers are as follows:

1. inadequate preparation at the primary and secondary level,
2. need for special programs and supportive services to compensate for such deficiencies,
3. lack of adequate financial means to attend college,
4. a discouraging atmosphere for minority students at institutions of higher education, reflecting lack of a real commitment to affirmative action.

While it is not clear whether a critical mass of minority students is needed to break through these barriers and consolidate minority access, some of the present approaches being taken contain hopeful signs of the progress that is possible.

1. Inadequate Preparation of Minority Students in Secondary Schools

Higher educational institutions seriously concerned about increasing access to their schools have moved to institute a range of programs that "reach down" to the secondary schools to motivate minority and low income youngsters and supplement their secondary education in a variety of ways. High school drop out rates are high among minority students, often 30 to 40%, and less than two-thirds of low-income seniors in the area go on to college.

In response to such problems the University of Massachusetts opened a college preparatory program for high school students. Students are accepted who show strong motivation and academic promise but have performed unevenly or have been enrolled in business or trade school curricula in high school.

Colleges and universities are moving to compensate for inadequate secondary school preparation in three main ways: a) the operation of Upward Bound Programs which reach out to secondary school students of low income status providing an educational counseling program to prepare these students for admission to college; b) the operation of pre-freshman programs for special admission students who would

not ordinarily be accepted by the college due to inadequate academic preparation (admission to the college in some cases is conditional, based on successful completion of the eight to nine week program during the summer); and c) provision of tutorial services for students once they are admitted in order to help overcome academic deficiencies which block educational progress. Apparently, the results of these programs are satisfactory. For example, Northeastern University operates what is reported to be an excellent Upward Bound program, involving 70 students, of which 70% are minority youngsters, and 70-80% of the participants go on to college, mostly at Northeastern.

The University of Massachusetts also operates an Upward Bound program, which serves as an entry to the University of Massachusetts and other colleges.

The Upward Bound programs at Northeastern and the University of Massachusetts indicate that reachout programs can provide minorities with greater access to higher education. The students in these programs go on to college in substantial numbers.

The Roxbury Community College, scheduled to open in September, 1973, with a beginning enrollment of 500 students, 98% of whom will be Black and Spanish-speaking, plans to focus on the inadequate

preparation problem through providing a special general education program for persons with skills at grade levels 0 through 9. A specially designed curriculum focused on teaching basic skills will carry students to acquisition of a high school diploma and entrance into a college program. Interest and motivation to learn will be a major criterion for admission. The college will also operate an English-as-a-Second-Language Program for Spanish-speaking students as part of their concentrated preparation program. Reach-out programs will also involve courses in state prisons for inmates.

The college will operate two other programs for high school students with special academic and vocational interests. By working with the Roxbury Medical Technical Institute, which helps Black youngsters interested in medical fields, the college will provide special educational and supportive services for twenty-five high school seniors per year, and guarantee admissions and scholarships at the University of Massachusetts undergraduate and medical school for some of them. A similar program will identify twenty-five high school students interested in engineering and provide them with special preparation in secondary school through seminars conducted by local college professors. They will be guaranteed admission to colleges of engineering upon completion of high school.

Through this kind of educational approach Roxbury Community College plans to reverse the present situation of lack of access to community colleges.

2. Special Programs and Supportive Services

Colleges are increasingly setting up special programs and supportive services in order to aid minority students to cope with academic demands of college and the total educational environment of these institutions. It is recognized that provisions such as these are essential to the retention of the largest share of minority students enrolled, particularly those with special status. Services provided include tutoring, counseling, skill development in typing, writing, reading, and research, and participation in special cultural and recreational events. In most cases for Black students these services are provided by Black personnel within a special program format, operated by Black administrators and designed to be sensitive to the cultural identity and other needs of Black students. For example, at Boston University these supportive services basically flow through the M.L. King, Jr. Center, which operates a Skills Bank, Reading and Study Skills Center, tutorial services, career and placement services, drug education program, and a range of cultural, social,

recreational, and educational programs designed to enhance the intellectual and social development of students through Black experience.

At Northeastern University the special and supportive services are provided through the framework of the Afro-American Institute. The Institute provides four basic programs: 1) tutorial services; 2) counseling services; 3) an accredited Black Studies Program; and 4) Afro-American Library Resource Center. The Institute gives priority to servicing minority students whose continuance in the University is dependent on receiving special supportive help.

At the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the specialized and supportive services flow through the CCEBS program (Committee for Collegiate Education of Black Students). In addition to counseling and tutorial services, 549 minority students receive financial assistance through the program. Like the programs at Northeastern and Boston University, CCEBS is a supportive home to which minority students can come to obtain cultural, social, recreational, and intellectual nourishment to equip them to deal with the academic and educational demands of a white-dominated institution.

It is fair to say that the development of these specialized programs within an organizational framework under the operational

control of minority personnel are barely beyond the embryonic stage. In many cases, their initial development has been impeded by the "normal" political machinations and the trial and error of establishing a totally new kind of student support system in their institutions. The learning derived from initial development phases has resulted in the establishment of more stable and effective service operations. Institutions now beginning similar support systems for minorities should benefit from the early experiences of established programs.

3. Financial Barriers

Minority access to higher education in the Commonwealth is greatly dependent upon the amount of financial assistance which is made available to minority students. In light of this fact, it is unfortunate that the Massachusetts General Scholarship Program, which distributes $8,000,000 per year, doesn't collect information on minority status, thereby making it impossible to know what proportion of the 13,300 scholarship recipients are minority students. One of the major ways to measure the Commonwealth's commitment to minority access is through knowledge about to whom and in what amounts state scholarship resources are allocated.

The fact that two thirds of minority students in institutions of higher education in Massachusetts are in private institutions is possible only because of the high allocation of scholarship aid to minorities. Boston University is a case in point. Approximately 3,000 students, or 23.1% of the University's 13,000 undergraduates, receive financial assistance. Annual tuition is $2,490. In the 1972-73 academic year, the average University commitment per minority student for financial assistance is $2,088, compared to the average commitment for all students of $1,007. Beginning in the academic year 1970-71, Boston University pledged to minority freshmen 50% of the funds available in financial aid to each entering class. Of the total $760,000 in Boston University funds available to entering freshmen, minority and disadvantaged students received $380,000 for the academic year 1972-73. For the next academic year 1973-74 50% of $850,000 in University scholarship funds available to entering freshmen will be allocated to minority students, with Blacks receiving $340,000 and other minorities receiving $85,000. Ten to fifteen per cent of this total is specifically reserved for students who do not qualify under traditional entrance standards. These Special Service students receive supportive services through a special project which packages financial aid during the first year

so that Special Service students will not need to work. A revolving student emergency loan fund is established for students to receive up to $100 for financial emergencies; and in cases where more than this is needed, money may be secured with the co-signature of a parent or guardian. Currently, there are twenty-one Black Special Service students, eighteen of whom are from Massachusetts. Table 2 shows Boston University's financial commitment to minorities:

Table 2. Boston University's Financial Commitment to Minorities For the Classes of 1973-76

Category of Student	Dollars	Number of Students
Special Services Students	$ 150,000	71
Other than Black Minority	140,025	64
Afro-American Program Students	864,225	436
TOTAL	$1,154,250	571

As a result of the financial commitment by Boston University, two hundred Black freshmen were enrolled in the institution for the 1972-73 academic year.

Figures from the University of Massachusetts at Boston reveal that in 1971-72 41.6% of the $980,916 in scholarship money available was allocated to minority students, who comprised 296 of the 971 scholarship recipients. Figures for 1972-73 indicate that financial grants were made to 358 minority students out of 986 grants made. The average grant for minority students was $1,310 and for single white students $860. This trend at the University of Massachusetts at Boston probably accounts for the fact that its minority enrollment stands at 12.4%, highest among universities and colleges in the state.

A serious commitment to improving minority access to higher education requires that institutions follow the example of Boston University and the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and allocate 40 to 50 percent of scholarship resources to minority students each year. A statement from a document prepared by the Universtiy of Massachusetts, Amherst, relates to this assertion: "The success of the admission effort will be dependent directly upon the effectiveness of our financial aid program. Minority students have a very positive contribution to make to the life of the University, and they must be unencumbered by continuing poverty if they are to be effective. Because of serious handicaps arising from their background,

they work in the academic arena at a serious disadvantage and cannot be expected to support themselves by working their way through, at least not in the current years when they are struggling for academic parity."* The financial aid mandate regarding minority access is clear and urgent.

4. Affirmative Action Plans

A commitment to greater minority access to higher education must go beyond the admission of minority students. The commitment must also include the implementation of policies designed to increase the involvement of minorities at all levels throughout these institutions. The employment and personnel policies of institutions must include concrete procedures to attract, retain, and upgrade minorities in academic and non-academic positions.

The successful functioning of minority students in predominately white institutions of higher education is not only dependent on the quality of the academic program, financial assistance, and supportive services. The total educational environment, which includes the personnel which populates the institution, has a decided impact on students. An atmosphere of total acceptance of minority students

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*"Amherst Campus Proposal" regarding financial aid, p. 6 Section B. Conveyed in a letter and attached document to Academy for Educational Development, Inc. from F. R. Preston, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, March 30, 1973.

requires the involvement of minorities at all levels of participation. Various manifestations of institutional racism are encouraged to blossom when minority participation is circumscribed. Too often institutions develop employment patterns which concentrate minority personnel only in positions which deal almost exclusively with minority students, employees, and programs. This concentration of minority personnel within the institution suggests to students that they have a limited place in the institutional scheme of things. Failure of minority students to move out and participate throughout the educational institution, after normal amounts of ethnic clustering, is often reinforced by these patterns of "segregated" employment.

A genuine affirmative action program must embrace the concept of preference in those employment areas where there is an under-representation of minorities. The following statement from a section of the M.I.T. Affirmative Action Plan issued on April 6, 1973 accepts this concept: "In those areas where there is under-representation of minorities and women because of a history or pattern of exclusion and/or discrimination, preference in the applicant referral and selection process will be given to minority

or women applicants if the two candidates are equally qualified according to the concept of merit... The Institute's employment practices and its admission policies must emphasize individual merit, performance, and potential in ways that reflect the fact that limited prior opportunity, social discrimination, and forced segregation influence a person's record of achievement." The M.I.T. statement is significant because it moves beyond the narrow definition of merit which is achieving ascendancy in many academic circles.

Too often affirmative action plans state their goals in general policy terms without specifying concrete admission and employment objectives within a time frame for achievement. This makes it difficult to differentiate rhetoric from positive action.

In short, the attraction and retention of minorities is partially dependent on the total commitment of institutions of higher education to minority participation at all levels. This condition is crucial to creating the kind of environment that genuinely accepts minority students and encourages their participation in the total life of the institutions and full utilization of their resources.

III. Recommendations

1. A Commission on Minority Access to Higher Education should be established under the Board of Higher Education. This commission should be assigned the responsibility for developing a system for collection of all relevant data on minority access to higher education, reviewing and monitoring affirmative action policies and practices for all institutions, and making periodic reports on the status of minority access.

More specifically, the Commission should do the following:

a.) Assure the collection of all relevant data including information on allocation of scholarship funds, enrollment statistics, special programs to eliminate traditional barriers, etc. The information should be stored in one place and made available to the public.

b.) Review and monitor affirmative action plans of all institutions of higher education in the state.

c.) Review the activities of the Massachusetts General Scholarship Program and of the Higher Education Assistance Corporation regarding the allocation of scholarships and loans to minority students.

d.) Continue to recommend concrete enrollment goals to institutions based on the need for minority admission and the capacity of institutions.

e.) Prepare a periodic report on the status of minority access to higher education. The report should be submitted to the Board of Higher Education, the Chancellor, and the Secretary of Educational Affairs.

The Commission membership should include one representative from the Board of Higher Education, the Office of the Secretary of Educational Affairs, the Community and the State College Systems, a small private college, a private university and a public university. The majority of the membership should be minority persons. The membership should include students and a substantial number of persons representing the general public.

2. A commitment to compensatory access to higher education for minorities in this state should be reflected in the percentage goals set by institutions regarding admission of minority students and the allocation of scholarship resources. The total public state system should seek to enroll an additional 8,000 minority students over the next three years. One-third of these should have access to the University of Massachusetts at Boston and one-sixth to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The remaining half should be shared among the community and state colleges.

3. The community and the state colleges should become greater access/entry points for minority students. The natural potential of these institutions to serve minorities, many of whom are inadequately prepared for college, is not being fulfilled. The Roxbury

Community College to be opened in September, 1973, cannot be accepted as the only or major access point for minorities to this kind of educational institution. All community colleges should follow the example of Roxbury Community College by operating special reach-out programs and curricula and support programs to encourage the admission of minority students. Currently, these colleges are basically irrelevant to minorities as entry points to higher education in the state. The Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges should act to radically change this situation.

4. The Massachusetts General Scholarship Program and the Higher Education Assistance Corporation should collect information on ethnic characteristics of applicants and recipients. The availability of these data are essential to monitoring their activities.

5. The financial aid programs of all institutions of higher education in the state should allocate 40% to 50% of their scholarship resources for minority students, particularly the economically disadvantaged.

6. A proportion of the Massachusetts General Scholarship Program should be reserved for allocation to minority students. This approach is

recommended because the state legislature would probably not approve a separate scholarship fund for minorities at this time. Any move to increase the current appropriation from $8 million to $25 million should not lose sight of the needs of minority students.

7. The poor quality of public secondary education in urban centers throughout the state requires that all institutions of higher education develop programs and relationships which reach out to minority high school students. Institutions should follow the example of the University of Massachusetts and Northeastern University by guaranteeing admission and scholarships to students participating in community education programs such as the Roxbury Medical Technical Institute.

8. The Board of Higher Education should develop ways for institutions throughout the state to share various models of support systems and special programs to assist minority students inadequately prepared for admission to college. Institutions initiating new programs for the entry and retention of minority students should benefit from the experiences and learning of previous efforts.